



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 17, 2014

MEDIA CONTACTS

Jared Touchin | 928.221.9253
Jolene Holgate | 928.380.4174
Chrissy Largo | 928.637.5603
nnlb.communications@gmail.com

**Naabik'iyátí' Committee approves the Navajo Housing
Authority Reform Act; tables the Navajo Adult Guardianship Act**

WINDOW ROCK— Naabik'iyátí' Committee members on Thursday took action on several key legislations including approving Legislation No. 0075-14, the Navajo Housing Authority Reform Act of 2014 and tabling Legislation No. 0100-14, the Navajo Adult Guardianship Act of 2014.

With a vote of 10-1, committee members approved the NHA Reform Act of 2014 sponsored by Council Delegate Roscoe Smith (Crystal, Fort Defiance, Red Lake, Sawmill), which now proceeds to the Council for final consideration.

If approved by the Council and signed into law, the act will amend Title 6 of the Navajo Nation Code to allow the Naabik'iyátí' Committee to serve as the appointing authority of the Commissioners of the Board for NHA.

Delegate Smith explained that when the Council membership was reduced from 88 to 24 members, the standing committees also changed. However, language in Title 6 has not been amended to reflect the changes made to the Council's standing committees.

"One of the issues that has come up during this term is the validity of the oversight. So this legislation clarifies who that oversight will be," said Delegate Smith. "The Naabik'iyátí' Committee will assume that responsibility."

Another proposed change would eliminate language in Title 6, which requires Commissioners of the Board to take an oath of office prior to assuming duties.

The proposed legislation does not change the oversight authority over the Tribally Designated Housing Entity, which remains with the Resources and Development Committee.

Legislation No. 0075-14 will be on the Council's spring session proposed agenda.

On Thursday, the Naabik'iyátí' Committee also considered Legislation No. 0100-14, which seeks to enact the Navajo Adult Guardianship Act of 2014, sponsored by Council Delegate Danny Simpson (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Tse'ii'ahi, Whiterock).

Delegate Simpson stated that the Nation's guardianship laws were first implemented in 1945 and have never been amended.

According to the legislation, the rights of individuals with disabilities are rooted in traditional Navajo beliefs which say that such persons should, "be allowed maximum independence and be included as much as possible in decision-making about important aspects of their lives, such as

where they will live, their health care or their finances, and who may speak or act on their behalf.”

Delegate Simpson also explained that he had met with colleagues from the legislative branch and judicial branch, including Chief Justice Herb Yazzie, to compromise on the legislation language.

Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) raised concern over possible ramifications of the proposed act on disabled individuals and their families.

“We know we have serious substance abuse issues, so when is it that an individual reaches a certain stage of being mentally incapacitated to where they need help? Under this act, you will never be able to push them to get into rehab,” stated Delegate Tsosie. “This gives too much authority to that individual to not allow for the services that’s being offered to them.”

Delegate Tsosie said he supports the intent of the act, however, he recommended tabling the legislation to allow for a work session to clarify and work out the concerns of delegates.

Naabik’iyátí’ Committee members tabled the legislation with a vote of 12-0. A work session is scheduled to take place on Friday, May 16.

#

For news on the latest legislative branch activities, please visit www.navajonationcouncil.org